

## **“How the Terminator Can Ignite California’s Future”**

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Governor-elect Schwarzenegger faces critical choices that will determine whether California moves forward or stumbles further. In order for both him and the State to succeed, he must play a role unlike his action-hero personality. And, as he properly noted in his victory speech, “For the people to win, politics as usual must lose.” How can both he and the people of California accomplish these major shifts?

California can follow a proven decision-making process to get out of gridlock and back on track. Here are steps that businesses, city councils, and state and federal agencies have used over the past ten years to resolve their toughest issues successfully.

- **Enlist Everyone to Find Solutions**

The Governor-elect must creatively reach a much broader range of interests than anything he accomplished during the campaign. Like Governor Davis after the November 2002 election, Schwarzenegger will begin his service with less than a majority of the voters behind him. Compounding the Governor-elect’s challenges, the Republican Party holds only 40 percent of the State Assembly seats and even less in the Senate. Meanwhile, business groups, unions, and local governments have raised millions of dollars to protect their interests in the upcoming budget battles.

Schwarzenegger’s offer to “extend the olive branch of political reconciliation” to his former opponents is a good start, but genuine success in resolving the issues will require a much more vigorous effort. California needs local and regional town hall type meetings on key budget topics that include an expanded cross-section of participants. The discussions must focus on information and ideas rather than posturing and politics and give differing interests a true opportunity to listen to and understand one another. Only with broadened participation and creative new proposals can California gain real results.

- **Discover Shared Hopes that People Can Rally Around**

Fear and anger terminated Davis. Voters feared the stagnating economy and wanted change. Fear functions effectively to knock things down, but it fizzles as a fuel to ignite and sustain the future.

In contrast, encouraging people to discover their shared hopes and pursue them together provides a self-sustaining source of energy and creativity. Even in the most divisive of situations—feuding litigants, battling community interests, and philosophically opposed elected officials—participants have found shared hopes. When asked what their hopes are and why they are important to them, people shift to a constructive frame of mind.

They discover that they share or can accommodate one another's deepest aspirations. They find elements of a common direction. The attention shifts to how to get there.

- **Uncover the Real Issues That Need Action Now**

When diverse participants listen to and reflect one another's thoughts and concerns, the real issues that need immediate attention surface. In difficult situations like sorting out priorities and balancing budgets, the real issue usually isn't the presenting issue. Deeper, underlying issues that don't get on the table—for example, distrust among participants--block solutions. Long-festering problems like the State budget impasse or worker's compensation insurance indicate that deeper issues are at play and require attention. Participants need to raise these with candor and without finger pointing. Reflective listening skills provide the necessary tool.

- **Resolve Issues without Divisive Debates**

Even when Democrats controlled both the legislative and executive branches, California's budget debates sputtered. Such debates will be even less fruitful in the new environment.

Debates generate more heat than light. Instead of guiding participants to new insights and opportunities to work together, debates make positions more rigid. They promote egos over excellence. Winners and losers both make poor learners.

The decision process I'm outlining engages a wide range and number of participants and gets results because it focuses 100 percent on exchanging information and zero percent on debate. All participants identify both pros and cons of each option. As a result, they develop an array of potential solutions and the shared commitment necessary to implement them successfully. It works because people set their egos aside to get the job done together.

The most important priority of the Governor-elect's first 100 days is to put these practices into place to make decisions that will bring lasting results. Without this foundation, Schwarzenegger's term will be a sad repeat of the recent past.

Don Maruska, Master Certified Coach, is the author of the just-released book "How Great Decisions Get Made: 10 Easy Steps for Reaching Agreement on Even the Toughest Issues." Learn how Fortune 500 companies, family-owned businesses, litigants, and communities have solved the toughest issues they face. The process uncovers the deepest hopes people share and builds from that foundation to quickly and effectively gain extraordinary results. To read a free chapter, visit [www.howgreatdecisionsgetmade.com](http://www.howgreatdecisionsgetmade.com) today.